

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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FM AMEMBASSY CAPE TOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4455

INFO AMCONSUL DURBAN

AMEMBASSY GABORONE

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MASERU

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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E.O. 11652; N/A

TAGS: PINT, SF

SUBJECT: NEW POLITICAL PARTY EXPECTED TO BE FORMED

1. BEGIN SUMMARY. PROGRESSIVE PARTY AND REFORM PARTY PLAN TO MERGE IN THE NEAR FUTURE. DEMOCRATIC PARTY MAY ALSO JOIN IN FORMATION OF NEW VERLIGTE PARTY. ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION TO MERGE MAY BE MADE WITHIN MONTH. END SUMMARY.

2. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS WITH POL COUNSELOR MARCH 6, PROGRESSIVE PARTY LEADER COLIN EGLIN AND REFORM PARTY MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT DAVE DALLING ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEIR TWO PARTIES WERE WELL ON THE WAY TOWARD MERGER. EGLIN SAID ADVANTAGES OF FUSION OUTWEIGH DISADVANTAGES. BY MERGING, THE TWO PARTIES WOULD AVOID COMPETING FOR LIBERAL VOTES AND TOGETHER WOULD FORM SOLID BASE FROM WHICH THEY COULD ATTRACT MORE WIDESPREAD SUPPORT. IN RECENT MEETINGS, PROGS AND REFORMISTS HAVE FOUND THEY HAVE NO PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCES

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AND ARE AGREED ON BASIC PROPOSITION THAT ULTIMATELY THERE

MUST BE BLACK MAJORITY RULE IN SOUTH AFRICA.

3. EGLIN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH PROGS AND REFORMISTS ARE NOT ENTIRELY AGREED ON POLICIES OR ON LEADERSHIP OF FUTURE PARTY, THESE WERE MINOR DIFFERENCES WHICH COULD BE OVERCOME. POSSIBLY MORE SERIOUS PROBLEM IS THAT REFORMISTS ARE EAGER TO BRING THEO GERDENER'S DEMOCRATIC PARTY INTO NEW POLITICAL ARRANGEMENT, WHILE PROGS ARE LESS THAN ENTHUSIASTIC ABOUT GERDENER.

4. ACCORDING TO EGLIN, TWO COMMITTEES HAVE BEEN ESTABLISHED, ONE TO WORK ON POLICIES AND THE OTHER TO DETERMINE MECHANICS OF ESTABLISHING NEW PARTY. HE EXPECTS ANNOUNCEMENT OF INTENTION TO MERGE WILL BE MADE WITHIN A MONTH.

5. DALLING SAID THAT DIVISION OF LIBERAL FORCES INTO SPLINTER PARTIES WAS DISADVANTAGEOUS. HE ASSERTED THAT PLANS FOR MERGER OF PROGS, REFORMISTS, AND DEMOCRATS ARE WELL ADVANCED. PRESENCE OF DEMOCRATS IN NEW PARTY WOULD HAVE SPECIAL BENEFIT BECAUSE OF APPEAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS HAD FOR SOM AFRIKANERS. DALLING DID NOT THINS THAT PROGS' COOLNESS TOWARDS DEMOCRATS WOULD BE SERIOUS BARRIER TO MERGER. IN ANY EVENT, PROGS AND REFORMISTS ARE AGREED ON PRINCIPLES AND MOST POLICIES.

6. LIKE EGLIN, DALLING SAID INTER-PARTY COMMITTEES ARE AT WORK ON QUESTIONS OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR MERGER, AND THAT ANNOUNCEMENT OF PROPOSED MERGER WAS IN THE OFFING. THIS WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY MEETINGS OF EACH PARTY'S NATIONAL CONGRESS TO GIVE STAMP OF APPROVAL TO LEADERS' DECISION TO MERGE. THEN THERE WOULD BE FIRST CONGRESS OF NEW PARTY WHICH WOULD COMPLETE POLICY FORMULATION AND SELECT PARTY LEADER. ALTHOUGH PROGS HAVE INSISTED THAT EGLIN SHOULD LEAD NEW PARTY, DALLING SAID QUESTION OF LEADERSHIP IS OPEN AND WOULD BE DECIDED BY PARTY CONGRESS. HE ADDED THAT HARRY SCHWARZ HAS SAID HE IS NOT INTERESTED IN THE JOB.

7. COMMENT: BOTH EGLIN AND DALLING NOTED THAT UNFORESEEN DISAGREEMENT COULD SCUTTLE MERGER. HOWEVER, REFORMISTS' AWARENESS THAT THERE LITTLE THEY CAN ACHIEVE POLITICALLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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BY THEMSELVES AND PROGRESSIVES' DESIRE TO PARTICIPATE IN EXPANDED VERLIGTE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION MAKE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION PROBABLE. WITH OR WITHOUT DEMOCRATS, NEW PARTY WILL HAVE LITTLE IMMEDIATE IMPACT, AND CERTAINLY WILL NOT AFFECT POLICIES OF RULING NATIONAL PARTY. IN LONG RUN, MERGER IS STEP IN PROCESS WHICH COULD PRODUCE REALIGNMENT OF WHITE POLITICS ALONG MORE CLEARLY DEFINED LIBERAL/ CONSERVATIVE LINES.

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